

Welcome Home Plan

to Transition Veterans from Active Duty to New Jobs

Providing the Vision and Leadership Needed to Help
Veterans Transition to Employment



Councilmember Carl DeMaio

City of San Diego

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Veteran Unemployment in San Diego

As a proud military town with a large population of service members and veterans, San Diego must be a city committed to ensuring our veterans are successfully employed upon leaving the military and entering the civilian workforce.

There were roughly 200,000 more veterans in the labor force this June than there were a year earlier, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the *Los Angeles Times*. (“Veterans Face High Unemployment After Military Service.” *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 2011)

Veterans Employment at a Glance

Unemployment rate for California veterans age 18 to 24 is twice the average for non-veterans.

200 thousand more veterans in the US workforce now than last year.

252,898 veterans currently in San Diego County.

Unfortunately, a higher percentage of veterans end up without employment than the average population. In fact, recent veterans face unemployment rates twice as high as the rest of the population, according to news reports. (“Unemployment Rate Twice As High for Young War Veterans.” KPBS San Diego, November 23, 2010.)

We cannot stand by as those who fight to protect our freedoms return to civilian life unprepared to successfully enter the workforce. That is why Carl DeMaio has proposed his *Welcome Home Plan* to transition veterans from active duty to new jobs.

There are currently many organizations and volunteers out there already working hard to help veterans with job training. However, many involved with veterans’ job training programs explained at Carl DeMaio’s recent *Pathway to Prosperity* Town Hall Forums that there is a need for more coordination and cooperation between the various agencies, non-profits, and employers looking to hire veterans.

The proposals included in the *Welcome Home Plan* aim to address those concerns and provide a better framework for San Diego’s veterans to access the resources available to them.

“We cannot stand idly by as returning veterans face unemployment rates twice as high as the rest of the workforce.”

- Carl DeMaio



*Proposal 1 – Launch “Veterans Helping Veterans”
Volunteer Initiative to Assist with Career Training*

Carl DeMaio’s *Welcome Home Plan* first proposes the creation of a “Veterans-Helping-Veterans” volunteer initiative, modeled after a similar program that has proven successful in Houston, Texas. This program would increase the City’s outreach to transitioning veterans and their families by recruiting and training peer mentors (veterans who have successfully transitioned to civilian life) to help them access services such as job and career training, housing assistance, and mental wellness/health care.



Many veterans have a strong desire to help their fellow veterans reintegrate into civilian life. This program will provide the avenue to do just that by providing veteran-to-veteran mentoring opportunities to those that need assistance reintegrating into society, increasing the number of mentors and volunteers available for veterans’ assistance, offering veterans opportunities to assist their peers, and increasing awareness of veterans’ issues throughout San Diego.

Carl DeMaio has proven that volunteer-run initiatives like this can be successful via efforts to clean up the communities he represents in San Diego’s Fifth Council District. And while the *Welcome Home Plan* envisions this as a volunteer-run initiative, the City should consider working with the San Diego Workforce Partnership, looking at Community Development Block Grant funding, and other available grants and private investment to make this program as robust and effective as possible.

Houston’s Successful Veterans-Helping-Veterans Volunteer Program

The Houston Veterans Continuing Service initiative recruits and trains peer mentors (veterans who have successfully transitioned to civilian life) to help returning veterans access services such as job/career training, housing assistance, and mental wellness/health care.

Goals include:

- Helping veterans that need assistance reintegrate into society
- Increasing the number of mentors and volunteers available for veterans’ assistance
- Offering veterans opportunities to assist their peers
- Increasing awareness of veterans issues throughout the City of Houston.

Proposal 2 – Partner with regional governments to provide a liaison to military “TAP” classes & encourage veteran employment within the City of San Diego

The City must work with the military’s existing “TAP” program to bring job opportunities and job training programs to the veterans who need them. These classes provide a great opportunity to recruit the best and brightest military veterans to the City of San Diego’s workforce. Additionally, the City must make changes to its hiring policies to attract and retain more veterans. The *Welcome Home Plan* proposes two reforms in this area:

Create a “Transition Assistance Program Liaison”

“TAP” classes, or Transition Assistance Program classes, help service members during their period of transition into civilian life by offering job-search assistance and related services.



The law creating TAP established a partnership between the following federal departments: Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Transportation, and the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS). The goal of TAP is, to give employment and training information to armed forces members within 12 months of separation or 24 months of retirement.

According to the Navy, “An independent national evaluation of the program estimated that service members who had participated in TAP, on average, found their first post-military job three weeks sooner than those who did not participate in TAP.” (“TAP class helps out-processing sailors adjust.” Mike England, Naval Air Station Jacksonville Public Affairs, Navy.mil, 11/12/2003)

Clearly, there is a significant value for veterans who participate in TAP classes. However, at a recent *Pathway to Prosperity* Town Hall Forum, hosted by Carl DeMaio, multiple individuals involved in veterans’ job training programs remarked that the City of San Diego, other local municipalities, non-profits, employers, and outside job-training programs should work with the military to better connect with TAP participants. One participant remarked that, “sometimes the TAP instructor spent his entire career in the military and has little or no experience actually transitioning into the civilian workforce.”

Councilmember Carl DeMaio is proposing that the City of San Diego partner with other local municipalities to have a recruiter on-site at TAP classes and recruit retiring service members to jobs in local government. Additionally, this liaison should provide information about veterans' job placement programs, and provide information on job opportunities in the private sector. This liaison would provide the bridge between military service and a successful career in civilian life.

Improve recruitment and retention of veterans in City employment

Carl DeMaio supported last year's change to the San Diego City Charter which increased employment opportunities for veterans. An outdated line in the Code provided an advantage to veterans applying for City work, but only if that veteran was a **drafted** member of the armed forces. With the nation's all-voluntary military, veterans returning home from Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, were not able to take advantage of that benefit.

DeMaio and his Council colleagues voted unanimously to change that language and amended the City Charter to increase opportunities for veterans in City employment.

Moving forward, the City should provide additional incentives for our local veterans to apply for employment with the City of San Diego. Additional weight provided for combat veterans, injured veterans, and other similar categories would ensure that those who sacrificed for our freedoms here would receive an incentive to apply for City employment, and would find themselves more competitive for those jobs.

The City of San Diego would be lucky to have more of the work ethic, expertise, and dedication that veterans bring to the workplace here at the City.



Proposal 3 – Partner with San Diego 211 to improve “one-stop” access for veterans’ resources

San Diego 211 is a 24/7 phone service dedicated to connecting people with community, health, and disaster services, as well as veteran-specific resources.

When San Diegans dial 211, they are connected to a live, trained Client Service Representative (CSR) who can navigate the county’s system of resources and, according to their website, “prescreen you for possible program and benefit eligibility, and connect you to the best military or veterans resources and benefit information based on branch of service, status of service including veterans and active duty, and by category, such as behavioral health, education, and employment.”


With such a useful tool currently available for veterans, the *Welcome Home Plan* proposes that we should be utilizing this and actively partnering with the County of San Diego to expand and improve this program.

A representative from San Diego 211 should be included in the TAP proposal above, and the City should consider allocating some CDBG funds to these programs, if possible.

Military & Veteran Services



DIAL 2-1-1 or **START YOUR SEARCH** for Military & Veteran Services



VIEW EVENT CALENDAR

Proposal 4 – Work to streamline licensing and certification processes so that skills learned in the military can be more easily translated into a civilian job.

Another issue that came up during the *Pathway to Prosperity* Job Creation Forums, hosted by Councilmember Carl DeMaio, was the inability of veterans to smoothly and easily take the training they received in the military and transition that into the civilian workforce.

Many times, a veteran will have to go through the entire process of licensing and certification required in the civilian world to perform a task that they may have mastered during their time as a service member. The *Welcome Home Plan* proposes a solution.

While many of these skills are licensed and certified by the State of California, the City should partner with local trade organizations and veterans job training organizations to determine which professions have the greatest need for reform in this area, and work with local state legislators to implement that reform in Sacramento to streamline the certification process for skilled veterans.

Proposal 5 – Ensure that the USO has a permanent facility in San Diego so that military members can integrate into San Diego life even before leaving active duty

The USO of San Diego currently operates in a City-owned building downtown. With the sale of that building likely coming within the next year, it is vital that the City of San Diego ensure that the USO, and all of the programs it brings to service members, continues to have a stable, permanent home in the City of San Diego.

DeMaio proposes working with the USO to ensure that this important resource continues to provide support and assistance to San Diego military members and their families.

DeMaio has had extensive discussions with the City's Real Estate Assets Department, the USO, and others to discuss potential solutions to ensure that the USO continues to have a facility to operate from, whether it is the current location, or an even better location in the future.

One possible future location is Liberty Station, San Diego's former Naval Training Center, which has ample vacant space and provides a central, easy-to-access location for both veterans and active military personnel.

*Proposal 6 – Creation of a Military and Veterans
Advisory Board for the City of San Diego*

The City of San Diego has a number of Boards and Commissions which deal with various topics ranging from the Planning Commission to the Mission Bay Park Committee to the International Affairs Board.

While some have argued that there are too many boards and commissions at the city, one board worth having is a Military and Veterans Affairs Advisory Board. This board, made up of veterans, service members, representatives from San Diego's numerous military facilities and bases, and the defense industry, would provide guidance and advice on important issues facing the military and veterans.

If the *Welcome Home Plan* is adopted by City leaders, one of the first actions this board would be encouraged to take would be a partnership with the military's TAP classes, aimed at transitioning outgoing service members into the civilian workforce. Details on that proposal can be found below.



Proposal 7 – Expanding city contracting opportunities to companies hiring veterans

Many of San Diego’s small business owners would like to bid on city contracts, whether it is a construction project or providing other services. Unfortunately, the process to bid on those contracts can be confusing and overwhelming for many small businesses. Even large companies have found the process difficult to navigate, with some opting out of the application process altogether.

While the City needs to make this process easier for all business owners, the *Welcome Home Plan* encourages a special emphasis to attract companies which employ a large number of veterans.

Councilmember DeMaio is proposing that companies which will complete a project with at least 50% of the work done by veterans receive a 2.5% bid preference, and companies which employ at least 75% veterans on a project receive a 5% bid preference.

This program should be piloted for 2 years as part of the City’s small business program to measure the amount of veteran-employing companies that receive city contracts.

